

[Smalltown Folklore]

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Beliefs and Customs - Folkways

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Form [md] 3

Folklore Collection (or Type)

Title Smalltown folklore...

Place of origin Portland, Oregon Date 3/27/39

Project worker William C. Haight

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker William C. Haight Date March 27, 1939

Address Washington Hotel, Portland, Oregon

Subject Smalltown Folklore. (Minutes of a Literary Society).

Name and address of informant Charles Brown, Canyon City, Oregon.

Date and time of interview March 21, 22, 23, 1939, Three half days.

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Place of interview Brown's Service Station, Canyon City, Oregon.

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

Interviewer's former home town.

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Average office of small town service station, cluttered with early day relics. Mr. Brown has a notable collection of pioneer articles.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker William C. Haight Date March 27, 1939

Address Washington Hotel, Portland, Oregon

Subject Small Town Folklore. (Minutes of Literary Society).

Name and address of informant Charles Brown, Canyon City, Oregon.

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry

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2. Place and date of birth

3. Family

4. Places lived in, with dates

5. Education, with dates

6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates

7. Special skills and interests

8. Community and religious activities

9. Description of informant

10. Other points gained in interview

1. Dutch.

2. Canyon City, Oregon. Refused date of birth but private informant gives his age as 63.

3. One son, Harold; wife, Selma.

4. Canyon City, Oregon all his life.

5. None. "Oh, a little here and there, nothing formal."

6. Rancher, operated a store; present occupation of service station operator. Dates are not remembered.

7. His interests lie in the collection of antiques. He has a large, valuable collection of Grant County pioneering articles. I found particularly interesting his saddle and gun collection.

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Annually at the "62 Celebration" (celebration of the founding of the town) he manages the parade. The parade matches in all ways with the famous Pendleton Round-up parade.

8. Mr. Brown's community interests are necessarily large. In a small town everyone pitches in and helps at everything. Charley is always in the thick of things. I don't believe he has any religious activities, other than that he is noted for his kindness, charity, and friendliness. 2 9. Tall, well built man in his early sixties. Well preserved with a complexion whipped by the wind. Clear blue eyes. His manner is that of a westerner living in an isolated community. From the standpoint of a city dweller he would be a rugged individualist, but to the people he lives with he is just "Charley".

10. One of Mr. Brown's distinguishing acts is his annual Christmas party. He rounds up all the children in the county, of underprivileged merit, and gives them candy, clothes, toys — all the things a child would want and need. This is not done for show but because the man is naturally kind, generous, and finds a pleasure in helping others.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker William C. Haight Date March 27, 1939

Address Washington Hotel, Portland, Oregon

Subject Small Town Folklore.

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Name and address of informant Charles Brown, Canyon City, Oregon.

Text: One of the most interesting stores told here about the more prominent pioneers concerns an address given at a Fourth of July celebration.

The Fourth of July was the "big time" for everyone. The whole countryside would meet in Canyon, on Whisky Flat and celebrate. Each year some prominent man would give the oration suitable for the occasion and usually some one would read the Declaration of Independence.

It was during the early 60's that John C. Luce arose to read the Declaration. He read in a clear, firm voice nearly half of the Constitution of the United States, before old H. W. Hill could pull the ends of his coat-tail and help John find the right page. If you wanted to make old John mad all you had to do was mention the Constitution. Yes sir, as far as John was concerned, they were fighting words.

How was Rebel Hill named? Well, in early times, in fact when the town was just starting there were two distinct parties of immigrants. One crowd was known as the Whitney bunch, and I forget the other people. Anyway, part of the group were Southerners and the other group were Northerners. On the Fourth of July, 1862, the Southerners rung up the flag of the Confederacy on the hill. 2 The Northerners yanked her down in a hurry. Inasmuch as all the Southerners lived on the hill it naturally became known as Rebel Hill. As far as I know there were no casualties on the day the flag was rung up.

Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker William C. Haight Date March 27, 1939

Address Washington Hotel, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Small Town Folklore.

Name and address of informant Charles Brown, Canyon City, Oregon.

Comment:

The informant was unusually cooperative. His interest in the history of Grant County naturally found him more accurate and willing to "give" than the average informant, although this expressed itself chiefly in the privilege to copy from his "papers".

Rather an interesting thing happened to him while I was in Canyon City. A young slip of a girl, Mrs. Keith Province, had been talking to some friends in her husband's store about early gold mining strikes in Canyon City. On the way home from the store she glanced down and found a gold nugget. She excitedly ran with her find back to the store and showed the nugget to her husband. He suggested she take it up to Charley Brown's and have him weigh it on his gold scales.

When she handed Charley the nugget he said, "Well, I'll be damned that's the nugget I lost about eight years ago." The nugget he had found many, many years ago, and had it made into a watch fob. While managing the annual '62 celebration the nugget had been torn from his watch chain as he jumped on his horse.

The nugget showed where it had been soldered on to a fob or some other arrangement.

2

The following items were copies from the papers in the possession of the informant.

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Minutes of Literary Society, Canyon City, Oregon, 1866. Introduction: "Vanity has destroyed more than lead or steel." Joaquin Miller.

I think perhaps the best description of the writing in this journal would be in the manner of the time, "gorgeous grandeur". Most interesting feature of this Journal is the fact that Joaquin Miller, noted poet, was one of the active members of the society. The following are excerpts from the minutes:

"At a meeting held on December, Monday Eve, December 1866 for the purpose of organizing a Literary Association, Judge Miller (Joaquin) on motion was elected temporary chairman. M. W. Fechheimer, temporary secreatry. On motion Miller, F. F. C. Hyde, M. W. Fechheimer, were chosen a committee to draft constitution and By laws for the government of the society."

Description of a debate held one evening, "continued discussion with strength that gave credit," to its leaders.

"Thursday, January 17, 1867.

Resolved: That the Sentiment contained in the following thought is correct: Of forms of government let fools contest. What's [lest?] administered is best. least?

Resolved: "The Discovery of Gold on the Pacific Coast has been beneficial to mankind."

The debate about the discovery of Gold, was "prosecuted with strength and interest, fraternal courtesy being a prominent characteristic."

Evidently the following was said during the debate, "conversation makes a ready man, writing makes an exact one."

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“Resolved: That the mother exerts the greater influence on the character of the offspring than the father.

3

In the discussion of this question I do not wish to detract from the incomparable merits, those essential and touching characteristics those heaven born qualities of mind, the mother possesses. For it is to her we owe the enormous debt of gratitude for those high and holy principles of morality by which we are enabled to draw the line of demarcation between moral right and moral wrong, with facility and ease, as we meet the raging and fearful storms of life when our eyes become familiarized with the dark and damnable paths of sin and iniquity. What a swift majestic movement we behold on the part of those pure and immaculate precepts darting precipitatively into the vacillating mind to rescue the falling victim. This is the potent influence exercised by the mother over the moral force and stamina of the youth.

But are women as a class calculated to wield the scepter of power, to stand fearlessly at the helm on the trembling ship of state amid the danger and confusion when the contending waves of faction war and bloodshed with the same composure and firmness that those of the opposite sex would —

No, their natures are too weak too fragile, 'tis not their province as prescribed them by an omniscient and overruling Providence to assume the high responsibility of engineering affairs of state.

The father therefore, gives direction to the course but the mother makes it effective.”

“Good Advice: Stop grumbling, get up two hours earlier in the morning, and begin to do something out of your regular profession. Mind your own business, and with all your might let other peoples' business alone. Live within your 4 means, sell your horses, give away or

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sell your dog, smoke your cigar through an air stove. Eat with moderation and go to bed early. Talk less of your own peculiar gifts and vanities and more of those of your friends and neighbors. Be cheerful and fulfill your promises, pay your debts. Be yourself, all you would see in others. Be a good man and stop grumbling.”

RECIPES.

(These recipes were taken from an ordinary note book, handwritten. It was passed around among the early settlers for their use. Many of the recipes were for horses, these I did not copy but they may be obtained.)

February 12, 1863.

For weak eyes.

Linseed oil —— 1/2 pint

Gum camphor—— 1 oz.

Let this stand for 24 hours then fit for use. Apply with feather over eyes.

SOAP recipe for 8 gallon.

Take 2 lbs. casteel soap cut fine, put in 1 1/4 gallons of hot water untill (correct) dissolved then add 3 lbs. sal-soda and 1/4 lb starch. Dissolve the starch in cold water. Boil all together five minutes, stir well then add 6 1/4 gallons cold water. When cool it is fit for use.

5

How to make oil soap.

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Take Beaf yalls one talbe spoonful Rum.

A pint of Spirits of Ammonia

2 ounces of spirit of turpentine

2 ounces, shake it well and it befor use.

(The following items were taken from a rare copy of the Grant County [Express?], Canyon City, Oregon, Saturday, March 18, 1876, Vol. 1. No. 2. Published every Saturday, this was once the largest paper published in Grant County, a newsy, racy, live, progressive, and aggressive journal).

Castor Oil is a bully thing to mollify leather but as a beverage its a failure.

Young man quaff not the ruby rum,

Or you'll make the festive jim-jams come.

We can't say whether the young folks of Canyon ar practicing the latest novelty — the Centennial kiss, a hundred without stopping, or not, if not, why not.

Notwithstanding the hard times, the wages of sin are reduced.

Dr. Schenck's Pulmonic Syrup a cure for consumption.

The Spirit of '76—Crooked Whiskey.

Carvers of their own fortunes—Crooked Whiskey.

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(The following is copied from a journal owned by Mr. Brown. The recording of this court procedure was done in long hand. Fancy writing was particularly noted).

1. For South Fork Precinct Grant County State of Oregon

The State of Oregon Plff.

vs. SS

2. Two Indians Names unknown Defdts.

3. May 9, 1885. Information laid before me.

4. Informant examined under oath and his statement reduced to writing.

5. Information filed and the name of the private prosecutor endorsed there on.

6. Henry Blackwell was by me appointed a special constable of South Fork Precinct to execute the warrant of arrest.

7. Warrant of arrest issued and placed the hands of Henry Blackwell special constable for service.

8. May 23, Warrant of Arrest returned and filed.

It appearing from the return on the warrant of arrest by Henry Blackwell special constable that the defendants in the above action has been killed and there case therefore removed to a higher (or lower?) court no further proceedings can be handled in this court the case is therefore dismissed with the hope that the Hon. County Court will promptly reimburse the special constable and his assistants in the case. John W. Lewis, Justice of the Peace.

Officers:

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J. W. Lewis Justice Fees —————\$9.45

Henry Blackwell, Constable Fees —————64.75

Henry Blackwell, Burial Expenses of Defts.— 7.00

Charles Jaegar — 200 miles travel ——— 20.00

7

Johns Roberts — 250 miles travel ——— 25.00

J. C. Neal ——— 250 miles travel ——— 25.00

Sam Overlander — 250 miles travel ——— 25.00

George Miller — 150 miles travel ——— 15.00

Lyman Swick ——— 640 miles travel ——— 64.00

\$255.20

May 25, 1855, cort (court) bill made and filed with H. C. Jarrel clerk of Grant County, Oregon.

Transcript of the case made with the original paper filed with H. C. Jarrel, Clerk.

Given under my hand this 25th day of May 1885.